

WaterTalk Newsletter
February 2001

In This Issue

EPA Tours Southeast Idaho to Listen
EPA Sets Criteria for Nutrients
Reducing Pollution from Large Livestock Operations
Septic System Guidelines Released
Comment on EPA Public Involvement Policy
Estuary Poster Gets Rave Reviews
Online Data Bank Serves Citizen Monitors
Borrow Drop of Life Videos
Video Explains Hanford Cleanup
Watershed Funding Workshops Coming
Funding Opportunities
-Five Star Restoration Challenge Grants
-Magic Apple Grants for Washington Teachers
-Children's Health Grants
Watershed Grants Awarded
Watershed Successes Point to Partnerships
Bering Sea Summit: Get Involved
Millennium Project Celebrates Green
EPA Takes Action on Sewage Overflows
City Helps Residents Reduce Stormwater Problems
Beneficial Landscaping: Hedgerows Offer Function, Beauty
Calendar

EPA NEWS

EPA Tours Southeast Idaho to Listen

Nine senior managers and staff from EPA Region 10 recently traveled to Pocatello, Idaho for a **Listening Tour**. Over the course of three days, we met with over 100 people in the local community, including government officials, Tribal leaders, community groups, and citizens.

What is a Listening Tour?

A listening tour is a unique way for EPA to focus attention on a high priority geographic area by taking time to meet face-to-face with local community representatives. The meetings are an effective tool for us to get feedback about our work, and learn how to better serve the needs of a particular community. It is also an excellent opportunity to help build trust and open the lines of communication that are so vital to successful community-based work. These events are organized annually by EPA Region 10.

Why Southeast Idaho?

The lower Portneuf River Valley and Fort Hall Indian Reservation in southeast Idaho are among

our highest priority areas in Region 10. The area faces significant environmental problems, including two critical groundwater aquifers contaminated with hazardous chemicals, air and surface water pollution resulting from heavy industry and historical mining activities, and a major Superfund hazardous waste cleanup site. These are complex challenges, but ones that can be solved by finding ways to work together as effective partners with Tribal, state, and local governments, as well as community groups.

What Did We Learn?

Our meetings gave us a stronger appreciation for the dedication and unique resources these local communities bring to the table to solve environmental challenges. It was extremely valuable to sit down and discuss what is working and what is not working from their range of perspectives. We were able to identify areas where EPA and local groups are doing complementary work, and discuss how to best work together in those areas. We also heard overwhelming support for our efforts to locate an EPA staff person in the local area, and talked with a number of willing partners in helping us make that happen.

The listening tour highlighted for many of us the importance of knowing an individual community, and thinking about the variety of tools we have available to serve specific needs. For example, we heard from the Pocatello-based Portneuf Groundwater Forum that is making excellent progress on groundwater protection with the help of EPA grant funding. We also spent time talking with leaders of the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, whose 550,000 acre reservation is the site of one of the nation's few phosphorus processing facilities. We discussed how it is important for EPA to recognize the Tribes' connection to their land, and that our traditional risk models do not always take into account the unique ways they use the natural resources.

What's Next?

A message we heard consistently was that the local governments and community are looking to EPA to work with them to help solve environmental problems. One tool that Region 10 has used effectively is to create "place-based" assignments where an EPA employee lives and works in a critical geographic area. We believe place-based staff perform an invaluable role in bringing the community perspective to EPA's daily work, and provide greater access to agency information and the resources we have to offer. We hope to fulfill this need soon.

We sincerely appreciated the hospitality of the community in hosting our meetings, and we look forward to our continued work together! To learn more about the listening tour, contact Charles Bert, EPA Community Involvement Coordinator, at 206/553-0225 or 1-800-424-4372 x0225, or e-mail at bert.charles@epa.gov.

EPA Sets Criteria for Nutrients

EPA is setting water quality criteria which serve as recommendations to states and tribes for water quality standards for nutrients, including nitrogen and phosphorous.* States are expected to adopt or revise their nutrient standards by 2004, based on the new criteria. The new criteria are expected to significantly reduce nutrients in the nation's waterways. In a 1998 water quality report to Congress, nutrients were listed as a leading cause of water pollution. About half of the nation's

waters surveyed by states do not adequately support aquatic life because of excess nutrients. For more information, visit www.epa.gov/ost/standards/nutrient.html.

*May be held for review by the new administration.

Reducing Pollution from Large Livestock Operations

EPA is proposing strict new controls to protect public health and the environment from one of the nation's leading causes of water pollution -- animal wastes from large, industrial feedlot operations. The livestock industry has undergone dramatic changes in the past 20 years, consolidating scattered, smaller facilities into fewer but vastly larger feeding operations that result in greater and more concentrated generation of wastes. The new requirements would apply to as many as 39,000 concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) across the country.* EPA's proposal includes revisions to the definition of a CAFO, limits to land application of animal waste, and new technology requirements and effluent limits for discharges. Comments are due April 13, 2001. For more information, visit www.epa.gov/owm/afo.htm on the Internet.

*May be held for review by the new administration.

Septic System Guidelines Released

EPA recently released draft **Septic System Management guidelines**. The guidelines are designed to help communities establish management programs for properly functioning onsite/decentralized wastewater systems. The guidelines list a progressive series of five separate model programs. Management requirements for the onsite system become more rigorous as the technology that is employed becomes more complex and the sensitivity of the environment increases. Each model program includes a set of management objectives and a set of key activities. The guidelines, fact sheets, and other information on onsite/decentralized wastewater management, can be found on the Internet at: <http://www.epa.gov/owm/smallc/guidelines.htm>

Comment on EPA Public Involvement Policy

EPA is requesting comments on a **Draft Public Involvement Policy** through April 27, 2001. When the Policy is final, EPA will apply it throughout the Agency's programs and regions. The Policy will provide guidance and direction to EPA officials on effective ways to involve the public in its regulatory and program decisions. View the Draft Policy at: www.epa.gov/stakeholder/policy.htm. Call Loretta Schumacher at 202/260-3096 for printed copies, or request an e-mail copy from kahn.lisa@epa.gov.

TOOLS

Estuary Poster Gets Rave Reviews

An EPA poster, now available from Region 10, is getting rave reviews. Called **Estuaries:**

Scenes of Transition, this 38" x 25 ½" poster artfully depicts the geographic and biological diversity in US estuaries. Estuaries are places where the land meets the sea and where freshwater mixes with salty oceans. These ecosystems are among the world's most biologically diverse and productive. This striking and colorful poster includes a key identifying the fifty species shown. Great for the classroom. Suitable for framing. For more information about estuaries, visit www.epa.gov/owow/estuaries. For a free poster, call EPA at 206/553-1200 or 1-800-424-4372.

Online Data Bank Serves Citizen Monitors

Washington citizen volunteers and students can now send their own water data and restoration project information to a new data bank at the University of Washington. NatureMapping, and the Washington Departments of Ecology, and Fish and Wildlife, have partnered to bring you this web site, located at <http://www.fish.washington.edu/naturemapping/water/index.html>.

For years, most of the 12,000+ volunteer monitors in Washington have wanted a central, statewide place to send their data. Up to now, this grassroots movement has had no repository where their data can be stored, reviewed, and retrieved for possible use by agencies, scientists and nonprofits. Now it can be stored in a neutral location and compared with past datasets and other locations. Groups can find each other by organization name, water body, county, or watershed. Data entry is easy and quick.

More modules for the data bank will be developed. For details, contact Annie Phillips, Department of Ecology, at 360/407-6408 or aphi461@ecy.wa.gov.

Borrow Drop of Life Videos

EPA now offers an important new video series for free two-week loan. Produced by the Water Environment Federation, the **Water: The Drop of Life** video set is available for educational purposes. This six-part documentary series has been called "superbly beautiful and comprehensive."

Water: The Drop of Life travels around the globe to examine the social, economic, cultural, strategic and agricultural aspects of drinking water. From Japan to Egypt, and from South Africa to Los Angeles, California, the six-hour series profiles communities around the world and reveals how they are striving to meet increasing water demands. The series interviews world leaders and thinkers involved in water issues, including UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, Israeli statesman Shimon Peres, the Dalai Lama, former President Jimmy Carter, actor and activist Ted Danson, former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, Queen Noor of Jordan and Body Shop founder Anita Roddick. It explores water's sacred and spiritual value; its daily use in homes, farms, and industries; and the human quest to find and conserve water through ancient and new methodologies. To reserve your loan, call EPA at 206/553-1200 or 1-800-424-4372.

Video Explains Hanford Cleanup

The US Department of Energy's Office of River Protection has produced a video that explains the history and purpose of the Hanford cleanup. Called **River Protection Project**, the video features computer animated graphics, aerial pictures, historic film, and interviews of Department of Energy personnel explaining aspects of the project.

The video can serve as a tool to communicate with regulators, stakeholders, Tribes and the public. In eight minutes, highschool students or older audiences can understand how 40 years of plutonium production contaminated the Hanford site, actions taken to date, and future plans for the site and the waste. For details about the Hanford project, call the Office of River Protection at 509/376-6677. To check out the video for free two-week loan, call EPA's Public Environmental Resource Center at 206/553-1200 or 1-800-424-4372.

Watershed Funding Workshops Coming

More of the very successful **Watershed Funding Workshops** on the way. EPA and other agencies on the Watershed Coordinating Team will sponsor several funding workshops throughout Region 10. Attendees will learn about working with watershed stakeholders to leverage restoration and protection funding. Stay tuned for more information; firm dates and locations are not yet available. Visit www.epa.gov/r10earth/cleanwater.htm for updates.

Side box: The first issue of **Washington e-Water News**, the official newsletter of the Washington Water Research Center, is now on the Internet at www.wsu.edu/swwrc/newsletter.

Funding Opportunities

Five Star Restoration Challenge Grants

The **Five-Star Restoration Challenge Grant Program** provides modest financial assistance on a competitive basis to support community-based wetland and riparian restoration projects that build partnerships and foster local stewardship. Ideally, projects will involve diverse partnerships of five organizations, that contribute funding, land, technical assistance, workforce support, and/or other in-kind services. Projects must include a strong on-the-ground wetland or riparian restoration component, and should also include education, outreach, and community stewardship. This grant program is open to any public or private entity. For information and application materials, visit www.epa.gov/owow/wetlands/restore/5star/index.htm. Or, call Tom Kelsch, Nat'l Fish & Wildlife Foundation, 202/857-0166. Applications are due March 2, 2001.

Magic Apple Grants for Washington Teachers

Washington teachers who promote knowledge and stewardship of clean water can now compete for \$750 "Magic Apple" grants from the Department of Ecology. The program uses funds from an

Environmental Protection Agency section 319 grant. The grants will recognize past achievements while supporting new or continuing activities. For application forms or more information, contact: Annie Phillips, Department of Ecology, 360/407-6408 or aphi461@ecy.wa.gov. Applications packages are due March 1.

Children's Health Grants

Community Toolbox for Children's Environmental Health has announced guidelines for its 2001 grant programs:

Children's Environmental Health grants will go to community-based organizations working on children's environmental health issues. Proposed activities should increase the organization's ability and effectiveness in protecting children from environmental health hazards.

Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention grants will go to community-based organizations working to prevent childhood lead poisoning. Proposed activities should increase the organization's ability and effectiveness in protecting children at highest risk of lead poisoning.

For both programs, preference will be given to parent/grandparent and/or emerging groups based in communities of color and/or low-income communities. The application deadline is March 15, 2001. More information and application packets can be found at: www.communitytoolbox.org or contact 206/706-6490 or toolbox@teleport.com.

WATERWORDS

Watershed Grants Awarded

River Network recently awarded new Watershed Assistance Grants. Four proposals were awarded in Region 10:

- Pilot Point Traditional Council in Alaska for the "Ugashik Watershed Coalition" to initiate a watershed coalition to monitor and protect the Ug. This project, which focuses on the Ugashik Lakes, River, Bay, King Salmon, and Dog Salmon Rivers, proposes to build a coalition to network, assess the area, collect data, make recommendations and disseminate information.
- Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council in Alaska for a Yukon River-wide Assessment Project. This project proposes to complete an assessment of both existing scientific data and traditional knowledge; then integrate this information into a comprehensive Yukon River assessment plan that covers the entire river.
- Bonner Soil and Water Conservation District in Idaho for the Pack River Watershed Group. This project proposes to expand a fledgling watershed partnership by expanding membership, creating a communication network, leveraging funding, and building better interagency and private efforts to assist with improving water quality.
- Thornton Creek Alliance in Washington for the Thornton Creek Watershed Oversight

Council. This project proposes to establish a permanent council to oversee, integrate and coordinate work on current and future issues for the watershed.

This grant program is a partnership between the River Network and EPA under the Clean Water Action Plan. Its purpose is to support the growth and sustainability of local watershed partnerships in the US. For more information about Watershed Assistance Grants, check out the River Network homepage at www.rivernetwork.org.

Watershed Successes Point to Partnerships

Watershed Success Stories: Applying the Principles and Spirit of the Clean Water Action Plan is now available from EPA. The 68-page report highlights significant accomplishments in local community restoration efforts. Thirty success stories demonstrate how cooperation between federal, state and local partners can lead to innovative restoration solutions addressing a broad spectrum of water quality problems. More information and the report are available at <http://www.cleanwater.gov> under "What's New." Or call EPA's Public Environmental Resource Center at 206/553-1200 or 1-800-424-4372 for a copy.

Side Box: Have a Success Story of Your Own? If you have a watershed success story to share, send it to lindsay.andrea@epa.gov, or call Andrea Lindsay at 206/553-1896 or 1-800-424-4372. We will post stories on our regional web site and perhaps highlight a few in WaterTalk. A select few may be featured in national publications.

SPOTLIGHT

Bering Sea Summit: Get Involved

It's not too early to start planning for the **Bering Sea Summit 2001**, to be held October 1-5 in Anchorage, Alaska. The summit will foster open dialogue among diverse organizations, management agencies, and communities in the Bering Sea region. The aim is to establish creative partnerships, and achieve sustainable policies and durable decisions. Anyone interested in the future of the Bering Sea watershed and its resources should participate.

Why? The Bering Sea region, the most productive ocean system in the world, is changing fast. It has seen significant drops in species such as Steller sea lions, Northern fur seals, murre, and kittiwakes. Concerns are rising about contaminants in the environment and subsistence foods, the rapid warming of Arctic environments, and recent plummets in salmon returns. The summit will offer the Bering Sea community an avenue to forge a new strategic vision that can be endorsed by the array of interested parties...people and organizations who care passionately but differently about the Bering Sea and its resources.

Potential sponsors, exhibitors, and individuals with questions can contact Suzanne Marcy, EPA, at (907) 271 2895 or marcy.suzanne@epa.gov.

Millennium Project Celebrates Green

Millennium Green invites you to show your colors—green, that is. Millennium Green is a national project, created to promote activities such as planting and/or adopting trees, forests, gardens and natural resource wonders unique to a community.

Since its launch in December 1999, 214 projects have joined Millennium Green. Twelve of those projects are within Region 10: eight in Washington, two in Alaska, one in Oregon and one in Idaho. Visit their web site www.millenniumgreen.usda.gov to learn about the projects, find links to technical resources, get information for kids, and become an official Millennium Green Partner. Everyone can get involved in stewardship actions, through schools, organizations, businesses, civic groups, and foundations. Every project registered receives a certificate of appreciation.

So it doesn't matter if you celebrated the beginning of a new millennium on January 1, 2000 or on January 1, 2001. We still have a whole 1000 years to celebrate the beauty and importance of green open spaces and improve the quality of life in our local communities.

EPA Takes Action On Sewage Overflows

EPA has taken action to protect public health and the nation's beaches and waterways from disease-causing organisms and contamination that occurs from 40,000 raw sewage overflows each year. EPA is taking action to reduce sewer overflows that can lead to beach closures by proposing improvements in the operation and maintenance of the nation's sewer systems. The proposed rule would require improved management of capacity and maintenance programs to reduce sewer overflows by strengthening Clean Water Act permit conditions for over 19,000 sewage treatment plants around the country.* The proposal would require 4,800 "satellite" sewage collection systems to get permits for the first time. Cities would be required to improve plant performance, encourage new investments in infrastructure, and perform technical upgrades. For details, visit www.epa.gov/water under "What's New."

*May be held for review by the new administration.

Here is another local success story from WaterTalk. Bremerton, Washington is one of many cities across the country successfully working to reduce Combined Sewer Overflows, or CSOs....

City Helps Residents Reduce Stormwater Problems

The City of Bremerton is working with local property owners to remove their stormwater drainage from the City's sanitary sewer system. Bremerton, as with many older communities, has **Combined Sewer Overflows**. The drainage system which collects wastewater from homes and businesses was built to collect both stormwater and sewage. However, when heavy rainfall events occur, the combined water discharges into Puget Sound.

The City has been working to reduce combined sewer overflows, thereby improving local water

quality. Reduction in discharges of over 65% have been achieved to date with the goal of total elimination. The City is spending \$35 million dollars to control CSOs in publicly-owned areas. However, stormwater from private residences also contributes to CSOs. Many private property owners may not know how their systems operate and may not be aware that they are contributing to the CSO problem.

With funding from Washington State, the City has developed the “Cooperative Approach to CSO Reduction Program” to help private property owners:

- Identify how their systems function.
- Get technical assistance to make corrective actions if needed.
- Get financial support to separate downspouts.
- Evaluate the cost of removing other stormwater sources on their property.

Residents are notified about the program by mail, and invited to attend informational meetings. Citizens are asked to schedule a free site assessment with City staff. Staff will test the system and help define what needs to be completed if connections are found. A majority of the connected properties will simply follow the how-to brochure to remove downspouts. The City will provide financial reimbursement for downspout disconnections, rain barrels and work in the right-of-way, after certain conditions are fulfilled. After the work is done, residents schedule a post-inspection.

Visit www.cityofbremerton.com to learn more. For details, contact Chance Berthiaume at cberthiaume@ci.bremerton.wa.us or 360/479-2837.

ECOSYSTEM

Beneficial Landscaping: Hedgerows Offer Function, Beauty

Hedgerows bring to mind the beautiful English countryside, where farmers use hedgerows to contain farm animals, create pasture boundaries, and protect their land from erosion. Have you ever wondered, why not here? Whether you live in a rural setting where pasture fencing is needed, or in an urban or suburban setting where privacy or other objectives prevail, consider adopting this highly beneficial landscaping practice.

Hedgerows differ from ornamental or suburban hedges: they are usually composed of a mixture of native shrubs, small trees, and groundcovers, and they are not sheared, but rather are interwoven. Limbs growing outward are woven back into the hedge. This produces a thick tangle with spaces that allow birds to fly in and out, but which prevents the passage of larger animals. These living fences can provide many benefits, including beauty; cover, food, nesting habitat, and corridors for birds and small mammals; windbreaks; shade; soil stabilization; sediment and nutrient capture and retention; odor and noise reduction; visual screening— functions provided by “regular” fences, but so much more. Depending on the species used, hedgerows can be established in a variety of garden or landscape settings.

The tradition of hedgerows has been revived in Washington’s King and Snohomish Counties. The

King and Snohomish Conservation Districts have established the Snoqualmie and Snohomish Valley Hedgerow Projects, which are funded jointly by Washington State's Centennial Clean Water Fund, "to create living fences for livestock owners in the Snoqualmie, Snohomish, and Skykomish watersheds." Their objectives are to establish native plant hedgerows along waterways to prevent pasture erosion, protect water quality, create wildlife habitat, shade streams and provide woody debris to improve salmon habitat. Landowners along the Snohomish, Skykomish, and Snoqualmie Rivers and their tributaries can be considered for funding. The project funds fence installation, removal of invasive species, installation of additional watering sites, plants, and labor crews.

In King County contact Geoff Reed at 206/764-3410 x 103, and in Snohomish County contact Jamie Bails at 425/335-5634 x 106 or at jamie@snohomishcd.org for project details or for a copy of their hedgerow fact sheet.

If you cannot participate in the Hedgerow Project but still would like to establish hedgerows, take heart! Many local Conservation Districts offer late winter/early spring annual native plant sales where the public can cheaply purchase plant starts ideal for hedgerows. They also can provide a directory of retail native plant sources. We encourage the use of a variety of plants native to your area because they create a diverse and dynamic thicket, are well adapted to the local conditions, resist pests and pathogens, and provide food and shelter for wildlife. Check with your local Conservation District, Cooperative Extension Office, or Native Plant Society for a species list for your area. For a listing of all conservation districts in Washington visit www.conserver.org. For conservation districts in any US state visit www.NACDnet.org.

For more information, contact Elaine Somers at 206/553-2966 or somers.elaine@epa.gov, or, visit the website at www.epa.gov/r10earth/bl.htm.

Side Box: Small Community Workshops. Watch next issue for information about workshops for small communities. Planning for more than a dozen workshops is in the works, to help small communities learn about funding opportunities and regulatory changes. They will be held throughout Region 10. Can't wait until next issue? Call Jack Collins, Northwest Small Community Services, at 206/524-7482.

CALENDAR

February

5-9: Alaska Forum on the Environment, Anchorage, AK, 1-888-301-0185, www.akforum.com.

12-14: Puget Sound Research 2001, Bellevue, WA. Puget Sound Water Quality Action Team, 360/407-7311, www.wa.gov/puget_sound.

March

22-23: The Mighty Columbia: Stakeholders' Rights & Responsibilities, Seattle, WA. The Seminar Group, 206/463-4400.

26-29: Washington Water/Wastewater Operations Workshop, Ocean Shores, WA. Washington Environmental Training Center, 253/833-9111 x3372.

April

16: Deadline for contributions to the May 2001 issue of WaterTalk. Andrea Lindsay, Editor, 206/553-1896, 1-800-424-4372, lindsay.andrea@epa.gov.

22: Earth Day

24-26: International Conference on Restoring Nutrients to Salmonid Ecosystems, Eugene, OR. Oregon Chapter of the American Fisheries Society, 541-496-4580, www.gpafs.org/confnutr/.

May

American Wetlands Month, Terrene Institute, 800-284-4952, www.iwla.org/sos/awm.

7-13: National Drinking Water Week. Safe Drinking Water Hotline, 1-800-426-4791